

1/23/09

EXHIBIT Exh 14  
DATE 1/27/09  
48 2

Madame Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Ava Cook and I live in Missoula Montana. I am a Senior Companion with Missoula Aging Services. I am here to speak in support of increasing the Area on Aging budget to 10 million for the biennium. I am in support of this because it helps both me and my client's live happy and healthy lives.

I volunteer a lot in my community. I have been a Food Bank volunteer for fifteen years. I have been a Senior Companion for five years and serve 16 hours a week in this position. As a Senior Companion I take four lady clients out to do their grocery shopping, doctor appointments and to have a nutritious lunch. We would not have the opportunity to eat out without the coupon service provided through the Aging Services. This is our one nutritious meal of the day where we can also socialize and catch up on things. One of my clients is 96 years old. She walks circles around me! She has her own home, all of her friends have passed away and I am a main support for her. This client has a daughter in town who called Aging Services because she needed the extra support a Senior Companion could offer. My client really wanted me to come today to speak to you. She told me that she could not imagine what it would be like to not have the help of a Senior Companion. Many of my clients have no one else to assist them with the day to day things that need done. They refer to me as a sister sometimes, we are friends, we are very close and it is a big loss whenever I lose one of my clients.

My husband has a disability; he walks very slowly only with a walker. I am his main caregiver. I look forward to getting out of the house and socializing with my Senior Companion clients. I get \$459.00 a month in social security. I could not make it without the tax free stipend I receive for my Senior Companion work. It helps me to buy groceries, pay for insurance and other necessities I need in order to live a healthy life.

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the committee for the wonderful work that you do. I appreciate all of you taking the time to listen to us today.

Ava Cook  
1613 Lakeside Dr.  
Lolo, MT 59847

406-273-2276